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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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15 JUN 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE 303 COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: OXCART Deployment

REFERENCE: DCI Memorandum to the 303 Committee
dated 22 March 1966

1. My proposal that CIA deploy the OXCART system to Okinawa to acquire urgently needed photographic coverage of South China and North Vietnam was made to this Committee on 28 March 1966 and was discussed again on 11 May. It was decided that further action by the Committee should await the completion of certain tasks, namely: (a) an analysis of the quantitative capability of various photographic collection assets, (b) an analysis of the quality of the coverage which these assets might obtain, (c) a review of the political reactions of Japan to OXCART deployment, and (d) the formulation of the proposed U.S. posture in the event of various contingencies arising from the OXCART deployment. These tasks have now all been completed.

2. I believe there is substantial agreement that there is a continuing urgent need for high resolution photographic coverage of selected targets in South China and North Vietnam [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It has been clearly demonstrated that satellite photography, by itself, cannot meet this need. There is also agreement on the fact that the OXCART vehicle will add significantly to the photographic collection capability and that its contribution will increase steadily as the weather improves later this summer.

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3. In addition, there is agreement between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CIA in light of experience gained during the past three months that the [] program will not meet the need for coverage of South China and that we should now turn to the OXCART for primary coverage with the [] supplementing as feasible in lightly defended areas. It is my understanding that the JCS and CIA are also in substantial agreement that current coverage in North Vietnam has been inadequate; however, the JCS feel that presently available JCS assets can be tasked to provide more of the required data base coverage in North Vietnam and they have recently directed priority tasking to that end. The next few months should indicate whether adequate coverage of North Vietnam can be obtained by these means or whether supplemental coverage by OXCART may be desirable.

4. In view of the foregoing developments and of the conditions now existant, I now modify this proposal with the following recommendations:

(a) That we deploy the OXCART to Okinawa, beginning 15 July so as to have it in place and operational by mid-August when the weather will begin to improve,

(b) That we decide now that OXCART will be committed as required to obtain photographic coverage over South China and in other areas in China where the U-2 cannot penetrate,

(c) That, at the same time, we hold the OXCART in readiness to obtain photographic coverage of targets in North Vietnam, if required.

5. This proposal is responsive to the continuing urgent need for photographic coverage of South China and North Vietnam. In this connection, it is my understanding that the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board has recently reviewed the status of our existing reconnaissance coverage of North Vietnam and South China and is of the opinion that, from a strictly intelligence point of view, the OXCART should

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be employed in these areas. My proposal likewise is also consistent with the realities of the bad summer weather which has closed in since our original discussion. The proposed schedule provides for an orderly movement of the OXCART to Okinawa in advance of good weather and affords an adequate opportunity [redacted]

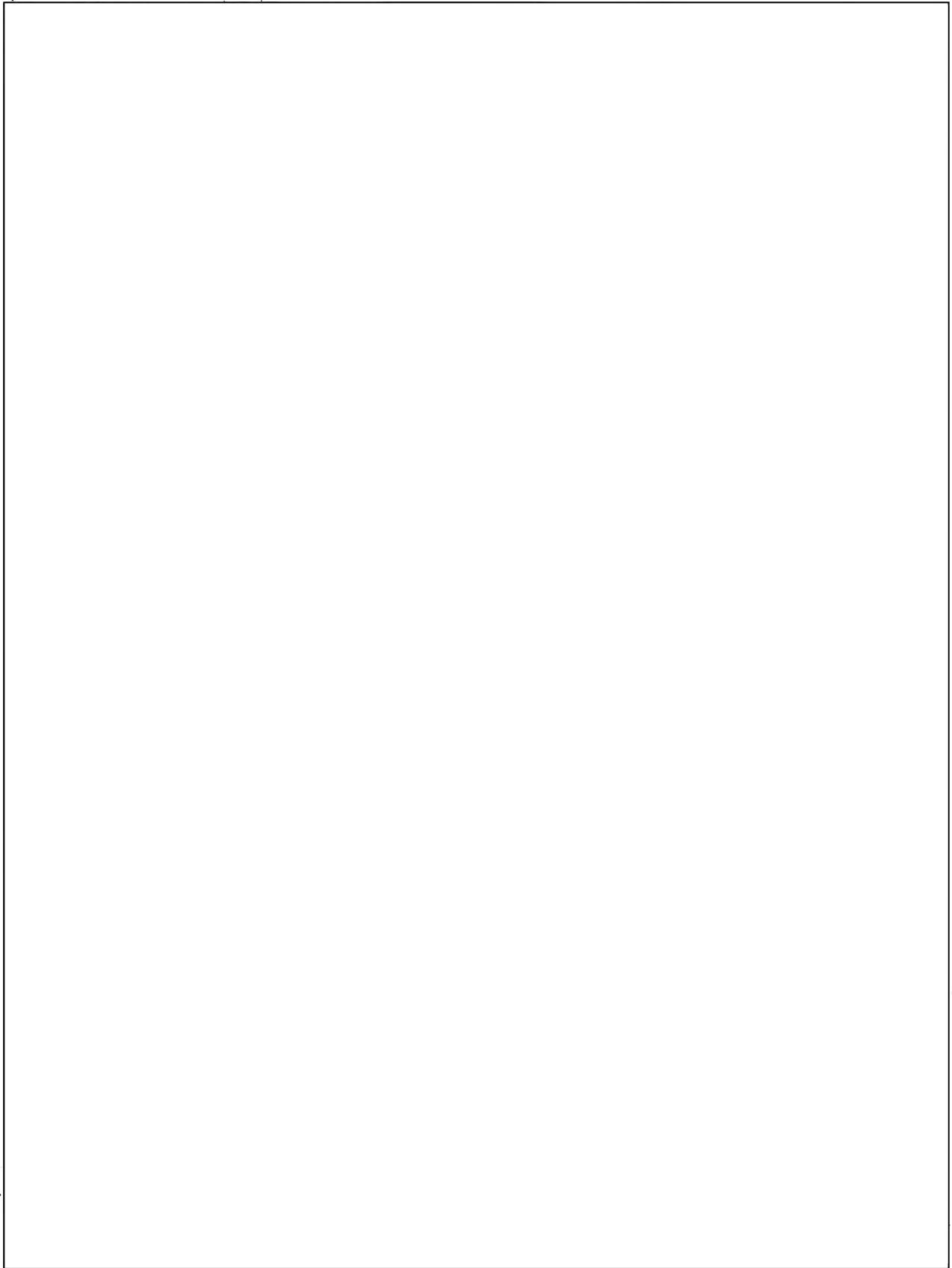
[redacted] in the most appropriate manner.

[redacted]
W. F. Raborn

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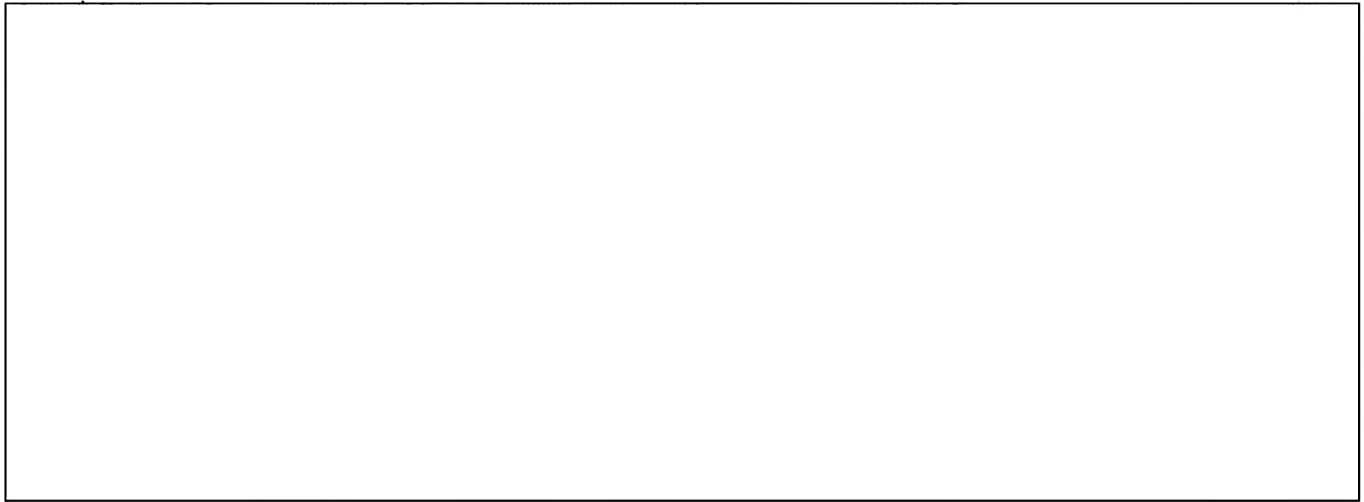
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INTELLIGENCE ANNEX

Problem:



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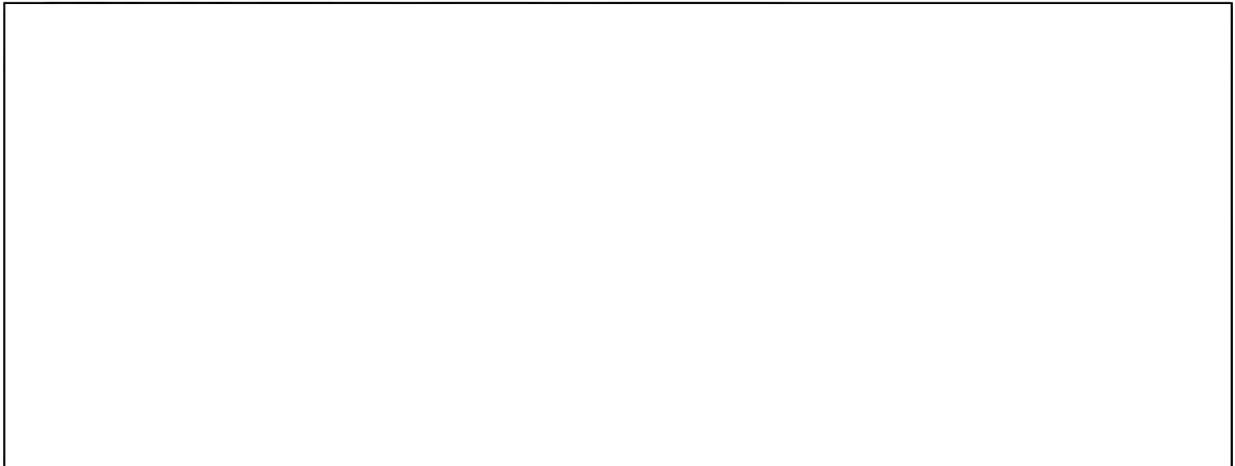
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SNIE 10-2-66

17 March 1966

Copy No 40

SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

Number 10-2-66

REACTIONS TO A POSSIBLE US COURSE OF ACTION

Submitted by

W.F. Raborn

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf

17 March 1966

DATE

Authenticated:

James D. Lay Jr.
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, USIB

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

17 March 1966

SUBJECT: SNIE 10-2-66: REACTIONS TO A POSSIBLE US COURSE OF ACTION

THE PROBLEM

To assess the principal reactions in Communist and non-Communist countries to reconnaissance over China and North Vietnam by OXCART vehicles based in Okinawa.

DISCUSSION

1. China. We believe that the Chinese would quickly acquire knowledge of the operation. Mission aircraft would almost certainly be detected by Chinese radar and, by virtue of speed and altitude, be identified as the new and advanced type of aircraft announced by the President in 1964. The chances are good that Chinese agents on Okinawa would become aware of the operation and that Peiping would quickly relate the new overflights to the base at Kadena.

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2. The Chinese would of course try to destroy the aircraft.

Assuming their failure to do so, and given their practice of not acknowledging successful U-2 overflights, they would probably not draw any special attention to this operation. Furthermore, in this contingency the kind of pressure they might try to apply to Japan or to any other country which might have afforded assistance would be of the most general sort -- if any at all.

3. The situation would be quite different if an OXCART aircraft came down on Chinese territory. Such an incident would be the occasion for a major political and propaganda campaign, particularly if a live American pilot fell into Chinese hands. In dramatizing the affair, Peiping would hope to persuade the world, including the American public, of Chinese strength and of the reckless aggressiveness of US policy. They would also use what resources they had to mobilize public opinion in Japan and in Okinawa against US control of the latter island and against the existence of US bases in Japan itself.

4. It remains to consider how the Chinese Communists would interpret US intentions in the light of this overflight. The Chinese reactions would be related to the presence of large US ground forces in South

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Vietnam, US bombing of North Vietnam, and apprehensions regarding the possibility of a US attack on China itself. The Chinese, in their propaganda, have been stressing the danger of such an attack. Although they may indeed fear a series of actions and reactions in Vietnam and elsewhere which would lead in time to a Sino-US war, they probably do not expect it to occur at an early date. Their apprehensions regarding the likelihood of a US attack on China may grow or diminish depending upon developments between now and the time the overflights begin.

5. Upon detecting OXCART intrusions, there is some chance that Peiping would conclude that the US, in unveiling an advanced system at this time, was seeking target intelligence which it meant to use at an early date. This chance would be greater if the program began intensively, with a large number of overflights in a short period, or if it began concurrently with a major expansion of US air attacks upon North Vietnam.* On the other hand, the Chinese have become accustomed to frequent probes of their air space by different vehicles, and they are aware that improvements in their own defenses have increased the vulnerability of older US

* Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, and Dr. Louis W. Tordella, for the Director, National Security Agency, believe the following sentence should be inserted at this point: "In any case the US employment of such a sophisticated reconnaissance vehicle would tend to increase Chinese fears that the US was expecting an eventual escalation of the Vietnam conflict into open conflict with China."

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systems. We conclude that, barring the special circumstances mentioned above, the Chinese would soon come to regard this vehicle, despite its advanced character, as another stage in a continuing US collection program, with no special significance for broader US intentions. Thus we think that these missions would not lead them to take any drastic new military action.

6. North Vietnam. The DRV is already subjected to heavy US air attack and reconnaissance. It would attach little extra significance to the OXCART operation.

7. The USSR. Through a variety of its own sources -- agents, satellite photography, intercepted communications, and possibly radar returns -- the Soviets would quickly acquire a fairly complete picture of the operation. They would probably reinforce any Chinese or North Vietnamese propaganda campaigns built around the downing of an aircraft. Their primary concern in this regard would be to forestall use of the aircraft over their own territory. They might make private communications to the US stressing the seriousness with which they would view any intrusion into Soviet airspace, but they would almost certainly not make US overflights of China the occasion of a major crisis in US-Soviet relations.

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